

Burglary suspects nabbed



Tacho Zuniga 01/23/1983



Terry Smith 06/14/1962

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An undercover surveillance operation by the La Porte Police Department cracked a theft ring that has cost businesses almost \$200,000 in lost materials and equipment in a warehouse industrial complex on the 100 block of Old Underwood Road during the last two months.

Sgt. John Krueger of the LPPD said that on Saturday, members of LPPD's street crimes division carried out a targeted surveillance effort and netted two suspects wanted for a number of warehouse thefts.

"Through their efforts, and assistance from the agency's patrol division, the operation resulted in the arrest of a pair of suspects," Krueger said.

Tacho Zuniga, 29, and Terry Smith, 49, both of Houston, were arrested after being spotted leaving a warehouse under police observation with materials that belonged to a local business. Both were charged with felony theft.

Krueger said the undercover operation was only in its second day when the arrests were made.

"The arrestees were observed by undercover investigators entering the warehouse area shortly after 3 a.m.," Krueger said. "The pair drove an older model pickup truck into the gated area after providing a correct ac cess code, then quickly turned off the vehicle headlights. The sus pects im mediately drove in be tween a ser ies of large box trucks and emerged after several minutes with obvious equip ment having been added to the truck bed."

Krueger said the police descended on the suspects, who gave up without incident.

Company representatives were contacted and all items were identified as not only belonging to the company, but holding a significant value in excess of \$25,000.

"The equipment was ap proximately 2,000 pounds of carbon steel consisting of numerous pieces of specialty fabricated parts made for specific businesses," Krueger said.

Krueger said as a result of the arrests, and subsequent investigative efforts, La Porte detectives were able to connect Zuniga and Smith to at least six prior industrial thefts from the area with an estimated accumulative value of \$180,000.